

## Message Text

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PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SIL-01 LAB-04 EB-07 /071 W

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R 191734Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9637

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 2482

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: THE SOCIALISTS ASSESS THEIR OPTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF THE  
FORTHCOMING REGIONAL ELECTIONS

SUMMARY. MORE FOR LACK OF ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVES THAN  
CONVICTION, ALMOST THE ENTIRE SOCIALIST PARTY HAS FALLEN  
INTO STEP WITH SECRETARY DEMARTINO'S TACTICAL GAME PLAN,  
DEFERRING RESOLUTION OF LONGER TERM STRATEGIC QUESTIONS  
UNTIL AFTER THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS. AS A RESULT, DEMARTINO  
CURRENTLY HAS THREATS TO HIS LEADERSHIP WELL IN HAND. ALL  
BUT THE PARTY'S SMALL LEFT WING HAS ALSO ACCEPTED HIS  
REJECTION OF THE "GRAND ALTERNATIVE" RETURN TO A  
FRONTIST ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS, AT LEAST UNTIL THE  
PARTY, THROUGH ELECTORAL GAINS, CAN COMPETE WITH THE PCI  
ON A BASIS OF EQUALITY. THE LACK OF REALISTIC OR DESIRABLE  
ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PCI'S OFFER OF THE "COMPROMESSO  
STORICO," IS DIMINISHING THE PARTY'S OPPOSITION TO A RETURN  
TO THE FOUR-PARTY CENTER-LEFT FORMULA AFTER THE REGIONALS.  
HOWEVER, FAILURE TO ACHIEVE THE EXPECTED GAINS IN THOSE  
ELECTIONS WILL NO DOUBT REOPEN THE DEBATE, BOTH OVER  
ALTERNATIVES AND OVER DEMARTINO'S LEADERSHIP. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SOCIALIST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ORGANIZATION HELD  
IN FLORENCE FEBRUARY 7-9, AND ITS AFTERMATH, REVEAL HOW  
SOCIALISTS (PSI) CURRENTLY VIEW THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND  
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THEIR POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES AFTER THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS.

THE TENOR OF THE CONFERENCE ALSO DEMONSTRATED THAT PARTY SECRETARY DEMARTINO FOR THE PRESENT HAS POTENTIAL CHALLENGES TO HIS LEADERSHIP UNDER FIRM CONTROL.

2. DEMARTINO'S POLICY OF GIVING PRIORITY TO INCREASING THE PARTY'S ELECTORAL STRENGTH, AND DOING NOTHING BEFORE THE SPRING REGIONAL ELECTIONS WHICH COULD BRING THE GOVERNMENT DOWN, IS NO LONGER UNDER SERIOUS THREAT FROM WITHIN. OPEN ACCEPTANCE OF THIS STRATEGY BY DEMARTINO'S PERSONAL ARCH-RIVAL MANCINI PUT TO REST REPORTS THAT THE LATTER WISHED TO PROVOKE A CRISIS TO ALLOW THE SOCIALISTS TO REENTER GOVERNMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

3. THE ALTERNATIVE OF GOING INTO OPPOSITION AND FORMING A COMMON FRONT WITH THE COMMUNISTS (PCI) HAS LOST ITS APPEAL, AT LEAST FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. IN CONTRAST TO THE BROAD SUPPORT THIS OPTION HAD IN THE PARTY LAST FALL IN THE WAKE OF THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS, ONLY THE SMALL LEFT-WING LOMBARDI FACTION OPENLY PROPOSES IT NOW. AND EVEN THIS GROUP HAS HAD TO AGREE THAT IT IS PRESENTLY UNREALISTIC, SINCE THE PCI ITSELF REJECTS IT. INDEED, ONE OF THE SHARPEST DIRECT CRITICISMS OF THE PCI VOICED AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONFERENCE WAS BY RICCARDO LOMBARDI, WHO LAMENTED THE PCI'S "ILLUSORY PREFERENCE TO OFFER THE DC AN OUT WHICH DOES NOT COMPROMISE THE LATTER'S SYSTEM OF POWER." NEVERTHELESS, DEMARTINO APPARENTLY FELT IT NECESSARY TO ELABORATE HIS CASE AGAINST THE "GRAND ALTERNATIVE" AT THE CONFERENCE. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, DEMARTINO SAID, "THE ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE A LOSING ONE FOR ITALY AND THE WEST." BECAUSE THE PSI WOULD INEVITABLY BE UNDER PCI HEGEMONY.

4. COUPLED TO HIS EMPHASIS ON THE LOVE OF LIBERTY AS THE DISTINGUISHING MARK OF SOCIALISTS, DEMARTINO'S ARGUMENT CLEARLY IMPLIES, AS HE HAD STATED EARLIER IN A MAGAZINE INTERVIEW, THAT THE PCI'S DEMOCRATIC AND WESTERN CREDENTIALS ARE NOT YET ACCEPTABLE. DEMARTINO ALSO SAID THAT UNTIL THE PSI IS IN A POSITION TO DEAL WITH THE PCI ON AN EQUAL FOOTING (I.E., STRONGER ELECTORALLY) THE POPULAR FRONT ALTERNATIVE MUST REMAIN AN "HISTORIC" BUT NOT IMMEDIATE POSSIBILITY. ON THE OTHER HAND, DEMARTINO DEFENDED IN PASSING HIS PARTY'S CONFIDENTIAL

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RAPPORT WITH THE PCI IN THE INTEREST OF "ASSOCIATING IT WITH THE DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE OF THE NATION." THUS HE REAFFIRMED THE PSI'S CHOSEN ROLE OF ACTING AS THOUGH IT REPRESENTED THE ENTIRE LEFT IN THE GOVERNMENT OR THE MAJORITY.

5. STUNG BY FANFANI'S SKILLFUL CRITICISM OF HIS PROPOSAL FOR A PREFERENTIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DC AS A PRESUMPTUOUS DEMAND FOR CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT PATRONAGE IN EXCESS

OF ITS ELECTORAL BASE, DEMARTINO HAS REPHRASED HIS PROPOSAL AS A DEMAND FOR PROFOUND CHANGES IN MANAGING THE ECONOMY AND GOVERNMENT. INDEED, THE PROPOSAL FOR A PREFERENTIAL RELATIONSHIP HAD EXPOSED THE PSI TO POLEMIC CHARGES OF "INTEGRALISM" FROM THE LEFT AND FROM THE CENTER, AND IS FOR THE MOMENT NOT BEING PUSHED OPENLY.

6. HENCE, BY AN INEXORABLE PROCESS OF ELIMINATION, THE REALIZATION HAS GAINED GROUND THAT IT MAY INDEED BECOME NECESSARY TO EXHUME THE FOUR-PARTY CENTER LEFT, NOT BECAUSE IT IS DESIRABLE, BUT BECAUSE, EVEN AFTER GAINS IN THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS, IT MAY REMAIN THE LEAST DAMAGING WAY FOR THE PSI TO RETURN TO GOVERNMENT.

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SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SIL-01 LAB-04 EB-07 /071 W

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 2482

7. CONTRIBUTING TO THE SOBERING PROCESS HAS BEEN A GROWING SOCIALIST CONCERN OVER THE PCI'S PROPOSAL TO THE DC OF A "COMPROMESSO STORICO"; A CONCERN WHICH INCREASES TO THE EXTENT THE "HISTORIC COMPROMISE" ACQUIRES PLAUSIBILITY. THE PCI'S INVITATION TO THE SOCIALISTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE "COMPROMESSO" DOES NOT ALLAY THIS CONCERN, SINCE A THREE-PARTY AGREEMENT WOULD MAKE THE PSI EVEN MORE IRRELEVANT TO THE POLITICAL SCENE THAN THE "GRAND ALTERNATIVE." IN VIEW OF ITS CONTINUING INTENTION TO "ASSOCIATE" THE PCI WITH THE GOVERNMENT, THE PSI DOES NOT OPENLY OPPOSE THE "COMPROMESSO," BUT GENERALLY REVEALS PSI RESERVATIONS BY STUDIOUSLY IGNORING IT. SIGNIFICANTLY, THE NATIONAL PSI LEADERSHIP IS MAKING NO SERIOUS ISSUE OVER THE DC'S

PRESENT DETERMINED EFFORT TO UNDO THE NOTORIOUS LOCAL "MINI-COMPROMESSI" OF VENICE AND AVELLINO, EVEN THOUGH (ELEFT-WING) LOCAL SOCIALISTS MIDWIFED THEM.

8. THE PRESENT MOOD OF THE SOCIALISTS IS ONE OF FRUSTRATION AT ITS RELATIVE IMMOBILITY AND THE INHIBITIONS AGAINST GIVING VENT TO THEIR BENT TO THE UNRESTRAINED POLEMICS WHICH SUIT THEIR STYLE. DEMARTINO'S POLICIES ARE ACCEPTED BECAUSE NO PRESENT ALTERNATIVES EXIST, BUT THEY EVOKE NO ENTHUSIASM. MUCH OF THE PARTY'S BASE, IT APPEARS, CLINGS TO THE OLD SOCIALIST TRADITIONS, MAKING THE LEADERSHIP MORE CIRCUMSPECT IN ITS ATTEMPT TO MAKE THE PSI A BROAD INTER-CLASS PARTY. EVEN THOUGH SOCIALIST SOURCES EXPECT THE

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PARTY'S PREDICTED GAINS TO COME ENTIRELY FROM THEIR RIGHT, THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONFERENCE SHOWED THAT THE PSI CAN STILL NOT PRESENT ITSELF AS ANYTHING BUT A WORKERS' PARTY, GIVING UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT TO THE LABOR UNIONS.

9. THOUGH PRUDENCE AND DC REJECTION HAS COMPELLED DEMARTINO TO SOFT-PEDAL HIS PROPOSAL FOR A PREFERENTIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, THERE SEEMS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THIS CONTINUES TO BE A MAJOR PSI GOAL. IT IS THE STRATEGY WHICH BEST SATISFIES THE PSI'S OBJECTIVES TO RETURN TO GOVERNMENT, FORESTALL THE "HISTORIC COMPROMISE," AND INCREASE THE WEIGHT OF THE PSI IN THE GOVERNING MAJORITY. ALL OF THIS LEANS HEAVILY ON THE COMMON ASSUMPTION THAT THE PSI WILL MAKE SUBSTANTIAL GAINS IN THE FORTHCOMING REGIONAL ELECTIONS. FAILURE TO DO SO WOULD OPEN UP WITHIN THE PSI A NEW AN LACERATING DEBATE OVER ALTERNATIVES AND LEADERSHIP, AS IT PREPARES FOR ITS CONGRESS IN THE FALL.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL PARTIES, ELECTION FORECASTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 19 FEB 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Office:** ACTION EUR  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 06 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <06 JUN 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <09 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** THE SOCIALISTS ASSESS THEIR OPTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF THE FORTHCOMING REGIONAL ELECTIONS  
**TAGS:** PINT, IT  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006